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NEPENTHE

BY  
A. W. G.



PRINCETON NEW JERSEY  
1926

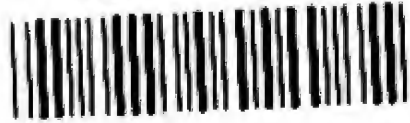


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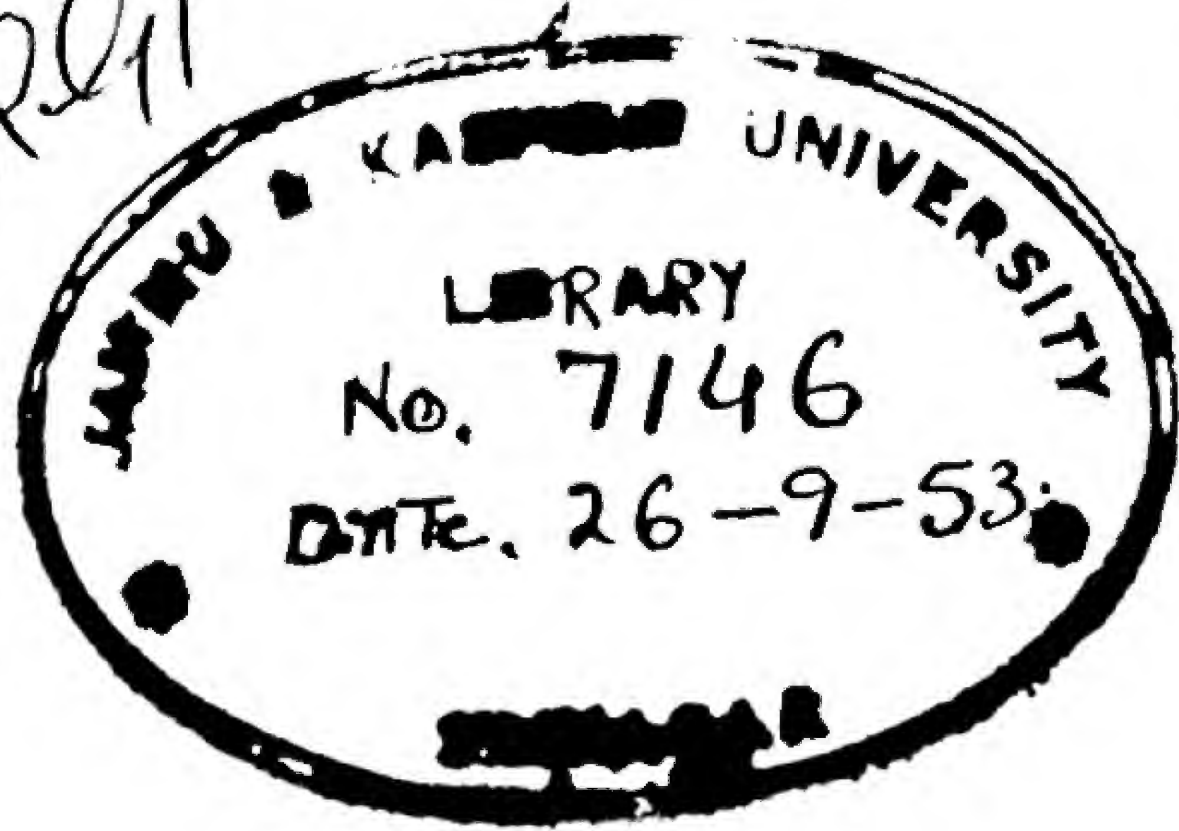
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# NEPENTHE



## I

THIS verse—if verse it be—

Distillèd drops of life wrung out of longing.

Day by day, and night by night, different moods

ascendant,

The joy and then the grief.

High lights, low lights;

On the mountains—down in anguish dark.

Progression truly as a tale they lack.

As hopeless all began—so hopeless all its ends.

Each verse, a story in itself of that day's hope or

its despair.

The sea was in a raging mood  
 When first I seemed to feel her,  
 And deem her worth the knowing.  
 Next day we walked the deck  
 Discoursing many things that people do  
 Who find a world in common,—  
 Problems of soul and deep affairs of life.  
 Then rose a kinship, growing,  
 Imperceptible, subtle, moving on with a relent-  
     less hand.  
 Her heart was riven by a sorrow  
 Her face and eyes knew cruel dolorous nights.

### III

My heart was surging with a mighty longing,  
For such a Grace as I beheld.  
I told her much of aspirations long since dead  
And new ones nascent,  
Waiting for the touch of such a one as she.

#### IV

One night while sitting on the deck  
Watching the great stars and moon and shimmer-  
ing of the ocean,  
We felt the mighty undertow of an emotion  
That stirred our hearts, impelled, our lips spake  
forth.  
Would it had ne'er been spoken!



# V

I told her how my youth was spent  
 Brought up by those who could not understand  
     my yearnings,  
 Hemmed in and wellnigh crushed by old  
     traditions,  
 Of customs owing to an alien land and race;  
 That searching ever for a human love,  
 I found it mirage-like from me receding,  
 A maddening rainbow ever farther, more  
     retreating,  
 Yet still elusive with its hope of yet more hope.  
 Till now with youth slow-ebbing from me,  
 I could view the starry glory of her life,  
 A singing hope, now plunged in dank despair.



## VI

There is a right so holy  
That if a son of God should dare  
To step within the precincts of that right,  
He'd pitch with darkest black his very soul.



## IX

She has no beauty as the world would say;  
She has a beauty born of heaven  
Won out of quiet wrestling with grief,  
Of holding firm unto the hands Divine.  
I feel so intimately her soul's essence  
That I cannot conjure up her earthly shape.  
And yet I see the little tricks of her,  
The nodding of the head, the movement of the  
    hands,  
The quiet dignity compelling.

## X

Her voice—ah yes, the gentle Southern drawl  
Distilled to music, its harshness all dispelled.  
The dear, dear “very” with the “y” clipped off.  
Saint Memory now it is, a zephyr, borne  
Over the vast of waters and of leagues.

## XI

Her eyes ! they spoke a liquid music to me ;  
Deep, fathomless, quickening the mute strings of  
the heart ;

Grey and violet were the hues they showed.

Grey when moved by purpose of the right,

Violet when driven by a deep emotion.

Ah ! those eyes they haunt me with their film of  
tears !

## XII

Her hair by breezes wafted blew soft against my  
face

While o'er the rail we leaned,  
Watching continents of ocean rise and swiftly  
fall again,

Like to our hopes which rose a second  
Filling our hearts with momentary joy.

## XIII

I touched her hair—and bathed  
My fingers in its balmy wealth,  
A wealth of brown, soft silken symphony!

#### XIV

I never dared to ask a lock of hair.  
Only withered violets, memory of a night in  
    Naples,  
Symbol of our dead love is that which now  
    remains.  
Nothing but these verses—yes—  
A line with her name and—  
And a poplar leaf she gave me in a garden in  
    Algiers—  
In Algiers—our glorious Eden of a little day—  
    so short.

## XV

There is no hope—how can there be?  
And we still live to be ourselves.  
There's nothing left, but lees,  
And looming of the dawning of a day.  
Back to the world of duty must we go,  
To other skies and worlds.  
'Twas but a dream in Italy, a castle built in  
Spain,  
A day in Algiers—O my love, how sweet!



## XVI

I go away to what men call my "home."

My home is in your heart, where'er you are.

But ever more an exile must I wander far and  
wide,

A memory of that dream seared deep within my  
soul.

## XVII

I feel as does the man returning to an empty  
house

When all the last sad rites are o'er.

So desolate, so alone, yet not perchance

With hope like his—but hopeless.

My cry is to the Lord of Right.

I am of men most miserable, I am without a hope.

I dare not ask for help, for fear that

Fourfold more the child of hell I'd be

If I should gain my will.

To be a man is first my quest in this my earthly  
sphere,

And to be traitor to myself, 'twould

Surely be a traitor unto her.

## XVIII

Dear Dream ! thou art so near to me  
All save thy form I feel.  
I long to image forth your face—  
Nought but your eyes I see.

## XIX

Dear Lady, you are all of woman to me,  
All that is sweet in life and truth and faith;  
High bred, gentle, firm, demanding of my labor  
All I know to reach your worth.  
Here I bow in lowly reverence toward you,  
Toward those dear, dear hands,  
I may not even kiss.

## XX

Dearest! I am saving all my dreams to tell you,  
All the thoughts I've sheltered deep within my  
heart.

All the glorious things I've read and thought  
In the weary lonesome aeons of the past.  
These songs are fancied segments of the mirage  
Conjured up before my weary brain,  
In the sweet idyll dreamed of  
In the splendid lands of Spain and Rome.

## XXI

My sweet misery it is to sit in desolate quiet,  
Dreaming of the golden days that are no more,  
Of cerulean waters, skies and storied summits,  
Amalfi splendid and Sorrento rich,  
The heavenly love,—the hallowed story,  
Which quickens into life the scenes now gone,  
That world so irrecoverably fair!

## XXII

You too mayhap have dreamt these dreams  
Are dreaming them tonight  
In the land of never-never, I in the land of  
    hope-more-hope.  
From out of the depths of hopelessness I glean  
A purpose, to approximate your high estate  
Of thoughts, of worship, trust and good.

### XXIII

I gaze upon the Promised Land from  
    an Empyrean height,  
I gaze and see a glory that is not mine,  
And dare not move lest I should mar the beauty  
    that is there.

Like to a precious cèramic beyond all price,  
Which at a touch from me will shatter into ruin,  
She looms above the common plane of life.  
The Lord of Might gave me the strength  
To keep that Treasure whole,  
A votive offering in His hall of Grace,  
San Graal for all the days that are.

\* \* \*



## XXIV

I never thought to see your face again  
Save as portrayed in a dream,  
When the sweet god of sleep would grant a boon  
To ease my aching heart with sight of you.  
The ship that brings you back to me  
Will bring surcease from sorrow for a term.

## XXV

You seemed a vision sitting in a charm—there at  
a distance ;

An aureole encircling all yourself—a substance  
barely earthly.

O how my heart burst forth—it scarcely could  
contain itself.

Ah ! what a dread, dear joy the meeting was ;  
And when I gazed into your eyes, I felt a thrill  
divine.

But you must now go on to where your duty waits  
And doleful days will follow on with lagging feet.  
Source of all my inspiration and despair  
There is a glory in the thought of thee !

## XXVI

The violets I gave I see you press  
With sweet caresses in your dear, dear hands,  
As if they were myself, my very soul—  
Each floweret like a little heart  
Enfolding in one blessed embrace  
Its sacred, solitary secret,—love.

## XXVII

A dizzy blazing dream you lighted up my world  
And when you left me, how my heart sank sick.  
Ah, those hours of converse—will they never  
    more return !  
'Twill be a memory soon, a joyous painful one.

## XXVIII

Maid of the Mist ! you fade away in corporeal  
splendor.

You gleamed a shining meteor in my heaven and  
then sped westward ;

Each second marking oceans of eternity between  
us.

Leaving a desolation in your wake.

## XXIX

Dear Heart! how drear the world is now to me;  
Today so desolate—yesterday so rich.  
I love, Oh! how I love your dear, sweet face,  
Wan, stained with tears.  
Your eyes, your smile, your little white, white  
teeth,  
Showing between the red, red lips.  
I hope, Oh, how I hope, O God of Love defend  
me!  
O Love, Oh, pray, but not to me, I am but clay.  
There is no glory in the sun today.

### XXX

Oh, that we to the Lotos Land could go—  
Like Ulysses and his storm-tossed crew;  
Forget the rights and duties of today,  
The petty strife of men, the irksome yoke of  
must,

And never more might wake to thoughts of  
grinding rounds.

Oh, Lethe were a joyous drink to quaff for one  
sweet hour.

But still a living, stinging conscience rouses us  
To nail ourselves anew upon the cross each day,  
each hour.



### XXXI

Dearheart! I love to sit and think  
Of you and of those lovely days.  
Days so exquisite that the very thought of them  
Quickens my blood and makes my eyes to gleam.

### XXXII

The memories linger with a sweet suspense  
Wrapped in a splendor ecstatic—sublime  
An impulse new revivifies my life  
And turns it all to song, compelling and complete.



### XXXIII

Come not when I am old, and all my faculties are  
dim.

Come in the fullness of our summer time  
To crown my manhood with your wondrous love.  
Come as my breath of life, my dreams all true,  
Companion, guide and wife.

### XXXIV

Come as I long to see you come, O girl adored!  
With eyes a-gleaming, grey and true.  
Come with those parted lips and outstretched  
arms—  
Come—to me all sufficient—utterly my own.

### XXXV

And I would bid thee come and stay  
Forever thou and I, come what come may,  
No weariness the days would have,  
All joyous song, dross burned away.

### XXXVI

I would hold you in my arms and bid you quiet  
And tell you that I love you highly, wholly,  
And bid the spectres of despair to flee—  
Singing you verses of the mighty masters  
    wounded as we  
Pouring their words an anodyne upon our pain.  
Then would we be refreshed with strength  
To meet the issues—or perhaps the God of  
    Grace  
Might look upon our pain and give us peace,  
But best of all, to give you me, and me to you.

## XXXVII

Ah, when I think of you, my darling,  
The thought brings peace.  
Troubled, weary, forlorn—a raging storm within  
You pour a calm upon the tumult of my soul.

### XXXVIII

You are to me some splendid gift of God  
Sent in my night of wandering in the gloom  
Of longings, yearnings, unfulfilled  
A gift which lifts me ever closer to the Unseen,  
Whom I would love and serve with brighter  
    sight,  
Than my blind way.

### XXXIX

Your love to me is a most wondrous thing  
Which like the glorious evening star burns  
    bright.

A beacon light, a guide unto my stumbling soul  
Confused, bewildered in this erring swirl.

### XL

You are to me an endless song  
Which I can sing and sing.  
A golden, ever cadent concord.  
Recurrent, splendid notes—da capo—ever new.



## XLI

As stars of hope your grey eyes shine,  
And speak a never-dying memory sweet—  
outvying every dream.

Like the most beauteous tale to me was ever told,  
They bid me trust that all this blissful story must  
come true.

## XLII

Dear, Lovely Lady, with the shining eyes—  
Whose boundless love illumines all my days:  
Dear Sylphlike form whose supple grace  
Entrances all my senses—all my thought.

### XLIII

My Dearest Love! well do I know the deeps  
to which we must descend  
Ah! many spans of bitter perverse hours  
Must be your lot and mine,  
Before the heights be reached.

### XLIV

There is a longing, tense, unsatisfied  
That tears the heart and sodden makes the mind;  
A yearning—ocean-deep—whose currents  
Lead, —ah God knows where.

## XLV

My spirit-life is at its lowest ebb,  
My faith in the Unseen seems but a flickering  
flame—  
Uncertain, fearful, dreading life's intent,  
No firm resolve, an aimless drifting, onward and  
then back again.  
I have a hope and yet it seems so dim,  
Yet if this hope were dead what would there be  
to strive for!  
It is my love for whom I yearn with every  
breath,  
Dear, Lovely Lady with the sad grey eyes.  
There are wild moments when I'd fight and win  
in spite of all,  
And there are calmer moments when I pause and  
think and pray.



## XLVI

Nirvana ! dulcet wealth of meaning to my ear,  
Oblivion ! kind nepenthe for my longing soul—  
And end of dull and weary waiting for the face  
that never comes.

## XLVII

Nothing to hope for—nothing to expect.  
Life a monotone repeating daily grinds.  
Love but a memory, incentive dead and gone,  
Not even dreams to cheer the passing days.

## XLVIII

Vain are these dreams—my words but snares,  
To lift us high to Heaven and drop to Erebus.  
Winged dreams that, Icarus like,  
Melt before the sun  
Falling, like a dying star.

## XLIX

Fate's hand of steel hard pressed upon our  
souls

It bids us sever the last link—even the link of  
longing memory.

Fate is another name for Right.

## L

Grim are my days—bereft of every mood,  
That makes for any peace of mind.

My loneliness grows tense and still more tense.  
No ken of mine can find assuage for pain that  
gnaws

My soul and leaves it stark and dour.

LI

Ah ! may there be a grace now to renounce  
A passion vain that haunts my every hour !  
Even though a tortured heart and anguished  
mind  
May mark me among men through dull, dull  
years ;  
Still right is better than a shame  
And a calm mind the nobler part.



LII

Dearest, I cannot sit and dream o'er things  
attainable

Save at a cost, where every instinct true  
And every standard raised to keep life sweet  
Is cast away, and this must never be.

LIII

I loved you with a holy passion, Darling!  
And though my years may far exceed the longest  
span;  
Yet evermore the shadow of a splendor  
Will hover o'er me while my senses last.

## LIV

Now as my dream departs to shadow-land,  
Ebbing away like to a passing soul,  
With saner sight I see, than erst  
When holden were my eyes.  
Down from the heights where I have dwelt  
With love, I must descend  
And tread the sad, sad ways, where mortals  
    dwell.

No more the high ecstatic moments live—  
Dread commonplace my daily round  
And all the marvels that I once did know  
Are blasted,—ashes blown to an unknown abyss.  
Clearly I lived this life in wonder realms,  
With hope of glory—almost in a spirit land,  
On rarest heights, far o'er the frets of men,  
Disturbed but by her frown or perverse mood.

## LVI

Gone is my castle of dreams  
And the high rock of endeavor.  
The sun burns dim.  
The shadows fade.  
The pulse of life is low.



## LVII

At least one lofty life I've led  
And kept the faith fought for through days of  
    strife.

Because I loved her soul and loved the right  
I chose the desperate days—  
Sweetheart, Farewell!

II



POTANAGUO

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I

Exquisite Pagan sent from long ago  
To brighten all my hours with converse gay!  
Like to a joyous figure on Tanagra vase  
With all the aesthetic abandon now renewed  
You flit in Grecian loveliness, confusing every  
thought;

Or as Undine quaint, your witcheries you cast.  
Exquisite Pagan sent from long ago  
Joying my hours with an embrace sweet  
Your spell is wrought—a willing thrall am I  
Tanagra Darling! Intangible Undine!

## II

To hold you tight—to feel the heart-throbs clear  
against my breast,

To hear you say, you love me—that burning  
kisses thrill.

The merge of space, eternity in that embrace,  
All things clean forgot—that moment quickly  
sped.

### III

I sometimes think that those old Pagan Gods  
Still live—that some of us are Greeks in thought  
and deed,  
That a delusion was the voice, that sighed through  
woods,  
And breathed “Great Pan is dead.”

#### IV

Those beads—Ah! yes, that necklace of  
translucent amber

I hung about your neck a summer's day  
A year ago—after the long, long absence from  
your arms

They were the symbol of my love for you  
A bond so dear—that ever as I gazed upon their  
sheen

They seemed the real presence of your faith to  
me.

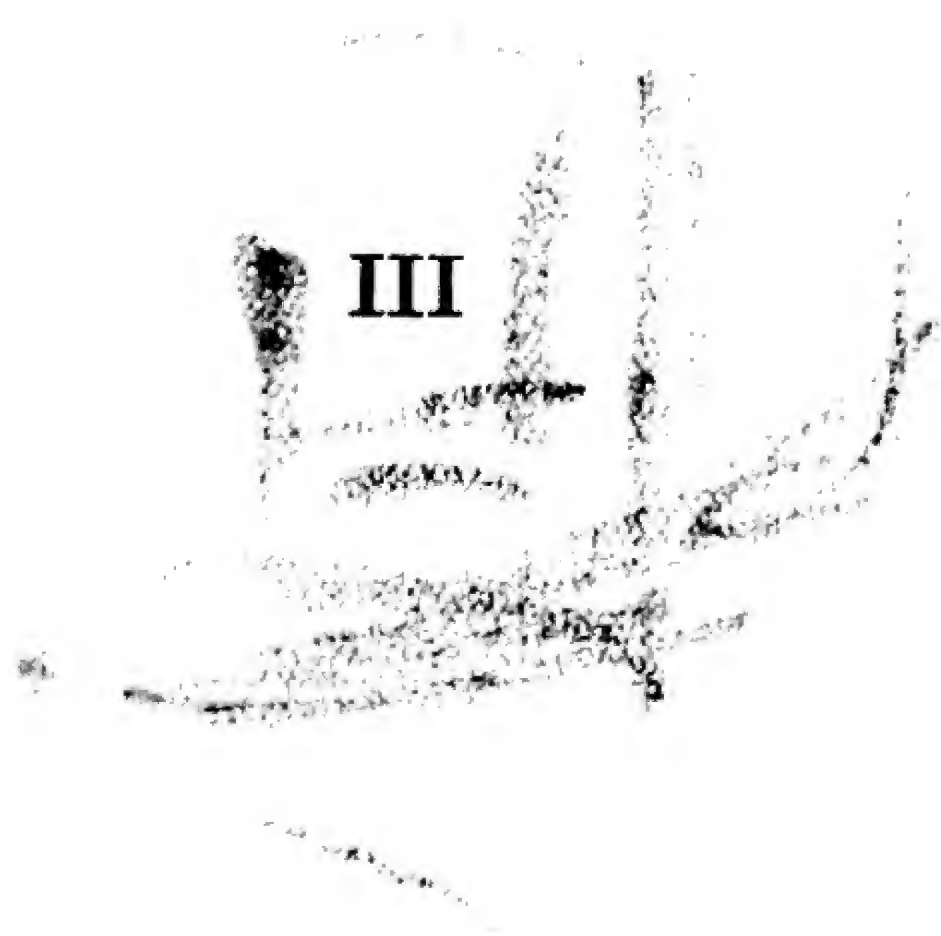
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How ugly now they seem—only yellow spheres—  
transmuted gold

Baubles—flippant finery, vacuous.

Each an accusing Erinnys when once

They spelt each one the tend'rest thoughts.





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I

Oh, your lips *must* sing, your heart may weep  
And a longing without measure may consume you  
as you sing.

Lonesome I must follow with nought a word or  
murmur

Knowing you were lent a second to exalt me, to  
sustain me.

## II

Never will she smile, as once she did  
I may see her, touch her hand,  
Feel a heart-pulse feebly answer  
But in heart-beats, Oh, how fearful!  
For a little it may thrill her  
Then she will suppress her longings  
As surely I must mine forever.

### III

In the night I waken sadly  
Yearning for another's presence  
One that's dead and gone forever  
To the dream land whence she came.

#### IV

I do not know whether 'twould be my wish  
For freedom from fetters, conventions that do  
bind

So sorely when 'gainst the goads I kick.  
The blood runs quick—a woman's love—  
God lack—why strive at all,  
Why not achieve—*vivamus dum vivimus!*

V

But with this sensuous frame  
How hard it is to live without the human touch.  
Few may be Saints, e'en though the spirit wills.  
The world with all its lure of dross  
Sings on its evanescent song.

## VI

I will always see the happy frank face bending  
o'er me

Like a dear child's or a woman's noble mood  
surround me.

All my strivings—all my reachings—fortunes,  
never—never for you,

Nothing I can give and lay down at your feet,  
Saying this I won with all the odds so dead  
against me,

This I had in fiendish conflict with the hell that  
raged within me.

In the thickest of the struggle hear your voice  
speak courage to me

In the hour of disaster with your tender arms  
about me

Gird me fresh to meet the onslaught

Hold my hands up when I faltered.

When all peace gone and heart burns only

Hold me so—that I might worship.

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